United Nations A/72/PV.77

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

77th plenary meeting
Friday, 26 January 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 140 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/72/713)

The President: I would like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/72/713. It contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly in which he informs the Assembly that 14 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/72/713?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 11 (*continued*)

Sport for development and peace: building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal

Solemn appeal made by the President of the General Assembly (A/72/700)

The President: I have the honour to make the following solemn appeal in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce.

> "The ancient Greek tradition of the *ekecheiria*, or 'Olympic Truce', born in the eighth century B.C., serves as a hallowed principle of the Olympic Games. In 1992, the International Olympic Committee renewed this tradition by calling upon all nations to observe the Truce.
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> "Through its resolution 48/11, of 25 October 1993, the General Assembly urged Member States to observe the Olympic Truce from the seventh day before the opening to the seventh day following the closing of each Olympic Games. This appeal was renewed in the Millennium Declaration.
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> "In the 2005 World Summit Outcome, our leaders emphasized that 'sports can foster peace and development', and encouraged the General Assembly to foster a dialogue and agreed proposals for a plan of action on sport and development.
>
> "On 3 November 2005, the General Assembly held a plenary debate on the agenda item entitled 'Sport for peace and development', and also

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adopted, with universal support, resolution 60/8, entitled 'Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Ideal', deciding to consider this item every two years in advance of each Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

"The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges sport as an important enabler of sustainable development, recognizing the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contribution that it makes to the Sustainable Development Goals, including the empowerment of women and young people, individuals and communities, as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.

"To this end, on 13 November 2017, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/6. In that resolution, the Assembly urged Member States to observe the Olympic Truce individually and collectively, within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, throughout the period from the seventh day before the start of the XXIII Winter Olympic Games until the seventh day following the end of the XII Paralympic Winter Games, to be held in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea.

"The Olympic movement aspires to contribute to a peaceful future for all humankind through the educational value of sport, in particular youth. The Games will bring together athletes from all parts of the world in the greatest of international sport events as a means to promote peace, mutual understanding and goodwill among nations and peoples — goals that are also part of the founding values of the United Nations.

"As an expression of these common objectives, the International Olympic Committee has decided to fly the United Nations flag at Olympic Park. The United Nations system and the International Olympic Committee have strengthened their mutual cooperation and support through joint endeavours in such fields as human development, poverty alleviation, humanitarian assistance, health promotion, HIV and AIDS prevention, child and youth education, gender equality, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

"I welcome the leadership of Olympic and Paralympic athletes in promoting peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic ideal, and the commitment made by various States Members of the United Nations to developing national and international programmes that promote peace and conflict resolution and the Olympic and Paralympic values through sport and through culture, education and sustainable development.

"As President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, I solemnly appeal to all Member States to demonstrate their commitment to the Olympic Truce for the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympic and Paralympic Games and to undertake concrete actions at the local, national, regional and world levels to promote and strengthen a culture of peace and harmony based on the spirit of the Truce. Referring to the original tradition of the Olympic Truce practiced in ancient times, as described in resolution 72/6, I also call upon all warring parties of current armed conflicts around the world to boldly agree to true mutual ceasefires for the duration of the Olympic Truce, thereby providing an opportunity to settle disputes peacefully."

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the solemn appeal in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 11?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 66 (*continued*)

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

(b) Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Draft decision (A/72/L.31)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda to introduce draft decision A/72/L.31.

Mrs. Rugwabiza (Rwanda): On behalf of my country, I have the honour to introduce draft decision A/72/L.31, entitled "International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda". I would like to first express our very sincere appreciation

to all delegations that supported the development of this important draft decision, as well as the delegations that have sponsored the text. I would like to thank in particular the following delegations, which have already sponsored the draft decision, while inviting other delegations to join in the sponsorship. I thank in particular the delegations of Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Israel, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Monaco, the Kingdom of Morocco, Namibia, the Niger, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda and Viet Nam.

What this draft decision seeks to achieve is to correct inaccuracies that existed in resolution 58/234, which was adopted by the Assembly 14 years ago, on 23 December 2003. That resolution established the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda. What we are seeking today in particular is to correct its title and its paragraph 1. To be clear, today's decision does not modify other parts of the resolution.

The text before the Assembly captures the historical facts of what happened in 1994 in our country, Rwanda, which is a genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and leaves no room for ambiguity. Historical accuracy and words are vital when referring to the genocide. The tactics of genocide denial and revisionism are well known and have been documented for a long time. Some people, mostly those who were involved by action or omission, promote the theory of double genocide in the futile belief that such a suggestion might divert from their own responsibility. In Rwanda, the reflection and commemoration of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi is a significant part of our reconciliation and unity.

The more than 1 million men, women and children we lost did not lose their lives to natural disasters, nor were they war combatants. They were ordinary people who were killed in the most horrendous manner because they belonged to a group that was dehumanized and targeted for total extermination. Any members of other communities who were against this extermination plan were summarily executed. Every year in Rwanda, at every commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi, we honour the courage and the humanity of all Rwandans and non-Rwandans who paid the highest price because they opposed the genocide against the Tutsi.

Today, as members of the General Assembly, we have a significant opportunity to re-establish historical accuracy and to align the language of resolution 58/234 with that of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, in particular in the decision of 16 June 2006 of its Appeals Chamber, which concluded

> "that it was 'a fact of common knowledge' that 'between 6 April and 17 July 1994, there was a genocide in Rwanda against the Tutsi ethnic group'".

The International Day of Reflection provides us, as members of the international community, with an opportunity to consider the factors that led to such mass atrocity and to renew our collective pledge of never again. It serves as an educative opportunity for future generations so as to equip them to fight all forms of hate and genocidal ideology. More important, in such worrying times, where we witness an increase in expressions of divisionism, extremism and hatred in many parts of the world, it sends a clear message that the United Nations is not, and cannot ever be, a platform for the promotion and protection of genocide denial or revisionism. It is, and always will be, a platform for the human dignity of all people.

Among other things, the International Day of Reflection serves to continuously raise the awareness of the international community with regard to the value of life and humanity and the ill effects of genocide and to renew our collective commitment to protecting and upholding fundamental human rights for all. It provides us with an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned from the failure of the international community to prevent and stop the execution of the genocide against the Tutsi. It is highly regrettable that, despite the numerous resolutions adopted by the Assembly condemning the denial of genocide, we continue to see such denial and revisionism extensively around the world.

Let me conclude by calling for the support of Member States for the important draft decision.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/72/L.31, entitled "International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce

that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of A/72/L.31: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Israel, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Monaco, Morocco, Namibia, the Niger, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Viet Nam and Zambia.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/72/L.31?

Draft decision A/72/L.31 was adopted (decision 72/550).

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States of America): Since the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the establishment in 2003 of the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, 7 April has become a solemn day to commemorate the more than 800,000 men, women and children whose lives were lost during 100 days of unspeakable violence. The United States joined the consensus with the entire General Assembly to support the continuation of the International Day of Reflection so that each year we may continue to honour the victims, as well as those who risked their lives to save others and the survivors who carry the memory of those atrocities. The annual International Day of Reflection also provides each of us and each of our countries the opportunity to remind ourselves of our common humanity and to recommit to protecting the vulnerable, to preventing mass atrocities and to upholding the inherent dignity and human rights of every human being.

The United States remains committed to supporting the people of Rwanda in their efforts to preserve the evidence of the 1994 genocide. Indeed, one of the strongest measures that we can take to prevent mass atrocities from reccurring is to preserve the histories of what has taken place and to properly capture the scope of the egregious acts that have been committed.

As such, the United States believes that changing the title and text of decision 72/550 to reflect a Day of Reflection on the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda does not fully capture the magnitude of the genocide and of the violence that was committed against other groups. We know that many Hutu and others were also killed during the genocide, many of whom were murdered for their opposition to the atrocities that were being committed. In the interests of prevention, we are concerned about reopening and revisiting the language used to describe past genocides and other mass atrocities in cases where doing so abridges the account of what happened.

While we will not stand in the way of changing the title of the decision, we believe that it is important to underscore that our understanding of the circumstances of the genocide in Rwanda has not narrowed. We urge our fellow Member States to insist that our histories of past genocides and other mass atrocities tell the whole story. We owe it to each and every victim of such crimes to faithfully carry forward their memories as part of our vow to say never again.

As we look ahead to 7 April this year and in the years ahead, the United States will join the international community in solemn reflection to commemorate all victims killed in the genocide in Rwanda and to recommit to the common cause of preventing such atrocities from happening again.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States upon the adoption of decision 72/550, on the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, under agenda item 66, "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support: causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa".

The African Group welcomes the adoption by consensus of the draft decision. That is the least that we can do to honour the memory of the children, women and men brutally murdered 24 years ago and to remember all of the victims of this tragic and dark chapter of our history. In this time of reflection and remembrance, we stand by the people of Rwanda and welcome the great strides they have made to recover from those indescribable events in order to give way to a brilliant future for that beautiful country.

The great pan-African Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, once said "Courageous people do not fear forgiving for the sake of peace". The courageous people of Rwanda chose to unite and involve everyone in the process of justice, reconciliation and healing. They chose to build a country for all and to strengthen the fabric of the country in order to prevent the recurrence of such events.

Unless we remember the lessons learned in Rwanda, we will never fulfil our pledge to ensure that other countries do not have to go through the pain and suffering that Rwanda endured. The African Union has incorporated those lessons into its pan-African values of solidarity and unity, as well as in its fundamental principle of non-indifference, enshrined in its Constitutive Act. Despite the numerous challenges that Africa still faces with regard to human rights, many efforts have been made over the past decade to build inclusive, tolerant and democratic societies, fight impunity, invest in our youth, empower our women and fight gender violence, build responsible and democratic institutions, and ensure the human security of all peoples of Africa.

More than 20 years after the genocide committed against the Tutsi in Rwanda, we continue to see the negation, revisionism and denial of the Rwandan genocide. Allow me to cite Gregory H. Stanton, former civil servant in the United States State Department, who categorized the denial of a genocide as its eighth and final stage. The international community must therefore stand up and reject the denial of the genocide, either through legislation — as we have seen in some countries — or through General Assembly resolutions. I would also add that, 23 years after the genocide, some of the key perpetrators remain free in Europe and North America, and they are at the forefront of genocide denial. If we are to eradicate the culture of impunity and bring about true reconciliation, they must be brought to justice.

Let us keep the memory of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda alive. Let us begin by combating the genocidal ideology, but let us not be prisoners of the past. We applaud the people of Rwanda for their resilience.

The African Union also wishes to express its sincere and fervent wish that, by supporting the lessons learned from the Rwandan genocide, the international community will never again be witness to such devastating atrocities.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Chaboureau (European Union): I have the honour to deliver this explanation of position on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The European Union and its member States are of the opinion that it is of the utmost importance to remember and to reflect at the international level on immense tragedies such as the genocide that affected Rwanda 23 years ago. In that respect, we welcome the adoption of decision 72/550, which contributes significantly to the prevention of and the fight against genocide.

The genocide decision adopted today by the General Assembly rightfully refers to Security Council resolution 2150 (2014), which condemns any denial of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, during which Hutu and others who opposed genocide were also killed. In that regard, the EU and its member States would like to express their appreciation at the fact that this decision recalls that the Hutu and other who opposed the genocide were also killed.

However, the EU and its member States deeply regret that consensus was not found among delegations to mention in the decision that the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda would also be to commemorate those other persons referred to in resolution 2150 (2014), namely, Hutu and others who opposed the genocide and were also killed during the genocide. In that regard, it is worth mentioning that the remarks delivered on 7 April 2017 by the Secretary-General on the occasion of the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, contained a sentence whereby

> "it is less than a quarter century since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, where more than 800,000 people were systematically murdered, overwhelmingly Tutsi, but also including moderate Hutu, Twa and others who opposed the genocide".

The EU and its member States also consider that such an important decision merited that more time be dedicated to informal consultation so that the decision would reflect all the sensitivities of the international community. In that regard, it would have been appropriate to start our discussion well before 20 November 2017.

Mrs. Furman (Israel): Israel co-sponsored today's decision, as the act of remembrance is both a duty and collective responsibility of the international community.

The atrocities committed in Rwanda were the product of a policy aimed at the systematic annihilation of the Tutsi. During the 100 days that began on 6 April 1994, more than 1 million Rwandans were slaughtered in cold blood. Families were murdered in their homes, worshippers burned alive in churches and innocents killed as they fled from soldiers and civilians. By remembering the crimes of the past, we express our commitment to preventing them from recurring in the future.

As the General Assembly expressed in 2003 with resolution 58/234, entitled "International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda", we must continue to vow to remember, we must vow to prevent such acts from occurring again, and we must vow to ensure that justice continues to be pursued. The systematic killing that occurred in Rwanda will forever leave a stain on the conscience of the international community.

Next week, the international community will come together to observe the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. In the light of our history, as a people that suffered the atrocities of the Holocaust, Israel deeply understands the importance and the responsibility of the international community to remember, educate and reflect on the darkest chapters in human history. "Never again" is not a passive notion. It is an active pledge to do all in our power so such atrocities never happen again.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 66.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.